DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 025 808 CG 003 470

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School Environment Preference Schedule--Seps.

State Univ. of New York, Albany.
Pub Date [68]
Note-6p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40
Descriptors-Individual Characteristics, *Personality Tests, *Psychological Tests, School Environment, Student Attitudes, *Student Characteristics, *Student School Relationship, Test Validity
Identifiers-School Environment Preference Schedule (SEPS)

The School Environment Preference Schedule (SEPS) measures, at the junior- and senior-high school level, "bureaucratic orientation," which is measured, at the adult level, by the Work Environment Preference Schedule (WEPS) of the same author. High scores typify the student who accepts and defers to authority, who prefers specific rules and guidelines, does not question expert judgment, and who seeks security in institutional and in-group identification. Scoring is on a Likert-type scale giving two points for "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," one point for "Undecided" or "Disagree," and zero points for "Strongly Disagree." The subconstructs measured are: self-subordination, uncriticalness, impersonalization, rule conformity, and traditionalism. Validation studies were conducted on American, Japanese, and Indian student samples. (BP)

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SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT PREFERENCE SCHEDULE - SEPS

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The School Environment Preference Schedule or SEPS is designed to measure, at the school level, a personality construct called "bureaucratic orientation" (Gordon 1968b), which is measured, at the adult level, by the Work Environment Preference Schedule or WEPS (Gordon 1968a). It is theorized that a very similar type of personality organization predisposes an individual to accept the values and procedures that characterize both highly structured work and classroom environments.[1]

High scores typify the student who is accepting of and acquiescent to authority, who would prefer to have specific rules and guidelines to follow, who is disinclined to question expert judgment, and who seeks the security of institutional and in-group identification. These characteristics are differentially fostered and rewarded in various school environments.

The SEPS should prove to be a useful instrument for research purposes. The underlying construct is of theoretical significance in areas such as guidance, personality, and educational and social psychology. Responses to the WEPS may be expected to be related to certain indices of school adjustment and achievement.

Scoring

The SEPS is scored by giving two points for each response of "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," one point for "Undecided" or "Disagree," and zero points for "Strongly Disagree." This scoring scheme was found to be optimal on the basis of internal and external item analyses of data from diverse populations. Scoring is easily accomplished by counting the number of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, multiplying this value by two, and adding it to the sum of the "Undecided" and "Disagree" responses.[2]

Illustrative normative data are presented in the appendix for several sets of reference groups, with percentile equivalents of each score given. For example, a total score of ____ would be interpreted as being higher than that attained by ____ percent of male 12th grade high school students. It is highly advisable to develop local norms where samples of sufficient size may be obtained, particularly where the local reference group represents a more meaningful frame of reference.

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[1] Discussions of the theory underlying the WEPS and SEPS will be found in Gordon (1968a, 1968b); and of the relationships between value orientations and job requirements in Gordon (1963).

[2] Two other scoring methods are used with scales of the present type, the traditional Likert weights ranging from 2 to -2, and weights of 2 for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" and of 1 for the other responses. (Korn and Giddan, 1964). The present scoring method empirically has been found to yield higher validity than either of the others. (Gordon 1967).

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Development

Since it was intended that the SEPS would measure a construct similar to that measured at the adult level by the WEPS, the set of categories or schema that guided the development of the WEPS was modified so as to be relevant to the school setting.[3] The modified categories are described as follows:

Self-Subordination . . . a desire to comply with the wishes of and to please one's teacher.

Uncriticalness . . . an uncritical acceptance of the opinions of experts or subject matter specialists.

Impersonalization . . . a preference for impersonal or formal relationships, particularly with one's teachers.

Rule Conformity . . . a desire for the security that following rules and regulations affords.

Traditionalism . . . a need to identify with one's school and to conform to the peer-group norm.

Sixty items, paralleling those which appeared in the developmental form of the WEPS but referring to the school rather than the work environment, were prepared for the above categories. All items were worded so that agreement would reflect acceptance of the traditional norm. No attempt was made to control for acquiescence by item reversal since acquiescence was considered to be characteristic of "bureaucratic orientation." The comprehensibility of each item at the 6th grade level had been checked through the use of the Dale word list, the judgment of reading specialists, and a trial administration to a sample of students at that level.

The set of items was administered for item analysis purposes to samples of students in the 6th through 12th grades in three communities. Impersonalization items were found to have little relevance in the school situation and accordingly were eliminated. The six items from each of the remaining four categories that had the most satisfactory internal statistics were selected to comprise the final form of the SEPS. As with the WEPS, one factor appeared to account for almost all of the response variance and accordingly, only a single score is obtained.[4]

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[3] The original set of categories, derived from classical organizational theory, represents the common denominator characteristics of most highly bureaucratized organizations (Weber 1946).

[4] "Uncriticalness" which was found to be marginally related to the remaining categories at the adult level does not appear in the WEPS, and "Impersonalization," which is inappropriate at the school level is not represented in the SEPS. Thus, while the WEPS and SEPS are designed to measure a common construct, they have only three out of four categories in common.

Validity

The following preliminary data have relevance to the validity of the SEPS. Additional data will be presented in an early revision of this Manual.

Both the SEPS and WEPS were administered to a sample of 70 male and 55 female high school students. Scores were obtained for the total score as well as for the six items representing each category in the SEPS and WEPS. Table 1 presents intercorrelations among the categories and the total score. The magnitude of the correlations within each instrument approach the category reliabilities, indicating that each instrument measures primarily a single factor. The correlation of the category scores of one instrument with those of the other and the correlation of .78 between total scores support the conclusion that the SEPS and WEPS measure a very similar construct.

Table 1. Intercorrelations among SEPS and WEPS "category scores" and total scores.

		SEPS				
		S	U	R	T	Total
WEPS	Self-Subordination (S)	.68	.56	.66	.62	.73
	Impersonalization (I)	.50	.52	.52	.56	.60
	Rule Conformity (R)	.60	.58	.67	.59	.70
	Traditionalism (T)	.55	.55	.60	.66	.68
	Total	.66	.66	.68	.69	.78

Note: Common categories are underlined. "U" represents "Uncriticalness."

Correlations between the SEPS and values as measured by the Survey of Interpersonal Values (Gordon 1960) and Survey of Personal Values (Gordon 1967b) based on samples of 51 male and 53 female high school juniors and seniors, are presented in Table 2.

All values that have significant correlations with the SEPS had been found previously to be significantly correlated, and in the same direction, with the WEPS. (Gordon 1968b). These findings further support the conclusion that the WEPS and SEPS measure a common construct.

Table 2. Correlations between the SEPS and value scales.[5]

Interpersonal Values	Male	Female
Support	.03	.04
Conformity	.04	.43**
Recognition	.10	.14
Independence	-.04	-.39**
Benevolence	.02	.02
Leadership	.02	-.19

Personal Values	Male	Female
Practical Mindedness	.05	-.12
Achievement	.12	-.08
Variety	-.28*	-.32*
Decisiveness	-.37**	.00
Orderliness	.39**	.15
Goal Orientation	.12	.39**

[5] In this and subsequent Tables * represents significance at the .05 level. ** represents significance at the .01 level.

Correlations of the SEPS with scholastic aptitude measures and/or school grades, for samples from three different schools in upstate New York, will be found in Table 3. All relationships are negative, suggesting that in pupil centered schools such as these the more bureaucratically oriented student tends to be less bright and is likely to do more poorly academically.

Table 3. Correlations of the SEPS with school grades and measures of Scholastic Aptitude.

School	Grade	Sex	Age	N	Grades	Aptitude	
A	12	Male	16.9	37	-.51**		
		Female	17.0	42	-.21		
B	6	Male	11.6	112	-.21*	-.31[a]**	
		Female	11.4	114	-.35**	-.31 **	
C	11-12	Male	17.0	51		-.30[b]*	-.27[c]
		Female	17.0	53		-.37 **	-.27

Note: a) California test of mental maturity b) Preliminary SAT - Verbal
c) Preliminary SAT - Mathematics

Means and standard deviations for all male and female students in the 7th through 12th grades of a University school are presented in Table 4. In this particular school, the nature of the student input had been highly stable over the previous six year period and attrition was very low. A monotonic decrease in means will be noted for samples of both sexes beginning at the 7th grade reflecting a consistent reduction in "bureaucratic orientation" with advancing grade level.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviations of students in six classes in a University school.

		Male			Female	
Grade	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
7	30	31.3	6.0	35	27.7	5.2
8	33	26.7	6.3	35	26.6	5.5
9	34	25.9	5.8	35	24.7	8.5
10	36	25.2	7.1	36	24.7	6.5
11	30	22.1	5.6	23	22.7	6.6
12	34	21.9	7.2	36	19.2	8.5

A similar decrease in means for the SEPS (in translation) had been found in a study conducted in six junior and three senior high schools in Fukushima and Tokyo, Japan by Akio Kikuchi. For both sexes and in both types of schools the SEPS means of the upper class students were lower than those for the lower class students. For both sexes large and significant mean differences on the SEPS were found between students in the junior and senior high schools.

The decrease in "bureaucratic orientation" that occurs in both cultures probably reflects both an increasing need for independence on the part

of young people as they grow up as well as a reduction in environmental constraints within the school itself with increasing grade level.

In another study by Professor Kikuchi (Kikuchi and Gordon, 1969) all students in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades were administered both the SEPS (in translation) and 20 semantic differential scales which had been found to be associated with positive and negative feelings toward school. Table 5a presents, at each grade level, the number of scales out of the 20 on which the high and the low SEPS groups (the upper and lower 15 per cent) had the higher average. The results indicate that (at each grade level) the more bureaucratically oriented the student the more positive his attitude toward school.

Table 5b presents for each SEPS group within each grade level, the number of scales on which the average group attitude toward school is positive. It will be noted that with an increase in grade level, members of both groups become decreasingly positive in their attitudes toward school. Also, within each grade level, the more bureaucratic students endorse a larger number of statements reflecting a positive attitude toward school than do their less bureaucratic counterparts.

Table 5. Number of semantic differential scales on which (a) one SEPS group shows a more positive attitude toward school than the other and (b) each SEPS group shows a positive attitude toward school.

(a)

Group	Grade 7	8	9
High SEPS	19	15	16
Low SEPS	1	4	3

(b)

Group	Grade 7	8	9
High SEPS	19	18	10
Low SEPS	11	9	3

Note: One tie occurred at the 8th and 9th grade levels.

That Indian high school students have substantially higher conformist values than their American counterparts was established in previous cross-cultural research (see Kakkar and Gordon 1966, Gordon and Kakkar 1966). These same differences are found on the SEPS (Table 6) between students of comparable socio-economic status in Jullundur, India and Albany, New York. Differences in "bureaucratic orientation" of a like magnitude also were obtained on the WEPS between college samples in these two cultures.

Table 6. Comparative data on the SEPS for samples of American and Indian high school juniors and seniors.

	Male			Female		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Indian	40	39.0	5.0	110	39.8	4.5
American	64	22.0	6.5	59	20.6	7.9
Difference		17.0**			19.2**	

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